

Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee
Confirmation Hearing for Nomination of LTG Douglas Lute
as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor
for Iraq and Afghanistan
7 June 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is an honor to come before you today for this confirmation hearing. I want to express my sincere thanks to you and ranking member Senator McCain for your prompt consideration of this nomination, especially given the other pressing demands before this Committee. Also, to the members of the Committee with whom I have met over the past several weeks, thank you for taking time to discuss this position and my nomination.

To a person, those with whom I have spoken conveyed two clear messages: first, a message of concern for the well-being and safety of our men and women in harm's way; and second, that we would all like to see us pursue a course of action that makes our country safer while safeguarding our national interests in the region. Surely, this is our common ground.

America is at war, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan represent what we in the military call our "main effort" in the Long War. The stakes for these two countries are high, as they are for all the countries in the region. But the stakes for the United States are also high. This region – where America has vital national interests – will not succeed if Iraq and Afghanistan do not succeed, and the U.S. plays a vital role in this cause.

Where are we today? Not where any of us would like. Especially in Iraq, progress has been too little and too slow. No one is satisfied with the status quo: not the Iraqis, not key regional partners, not the U.S. Government, and not the American public. To change this, we are in the midst of executing a shift in course as announced by the President in January. Early results are mixed. Conditions on the ground are deeply complex and are likely to continue to evolve – meaning that we must constantly adapt. Often, measures that fix one problem in as complex an environment as this reveal challenges elsewhere. But one factor remains constant – the dedication and sacrifice of our men and women, military and civilian, serving in these combat zones. They are a continuing source of inspiration to me and to my family.

The position for which I have been nominated is designed for one fundamental purpose: to advise the President on how to provide our troops and civilians in the field with increased focused, full-time, real time, support here in Washington. It will do so in two basic ways: by executing policy decisions comprehensively and by developing policy adaptations to meet changing needs. If confirmed, I will report directly to the President. I will brief him daily, and act on his instructions in fulfilling my duties. I will work closely with National Security Advisor Steve Hadley to clarify priorities, establish milestones, provide follow-through, and set the policy development agenda. The aim is

to bring additional energy, discipline, and sense of urgency to the process. Our troops deserve this support.

Mr. Chairman, I am a soldier; and our country is at war. It is my privilege to serve. This position represents a major personal challenge and I am humbled by the responsibility it entails. If confirmed, I will give the President my straightforward, candid, professional advice. I ask for the support of this Committee for my nomination.

Thank you.